

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ROME 19770 01 OF 02 031823Z

41

ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1586

INFO AMCONSUL FLORENCE

AMCONSUL MILAN

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 19770

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IT, VT

SUBJECT: VATICAN AND ITALY - PROPOSED REVISION OF THE CON-
CORDAT

REF: ROME 19253

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. SUMMARY: GOI'S PRESENTATION NOVEMBER 25 TO CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES OF THE "BASES" FOR REVISION OF THE 1929 CONCORDAT HAS ENGENDERED A FLURRY OF MOSTLY FAVORABLE COMMENTS BY THE POLITICAL PARTIES. DURING THE CHAMBER'S DEBATES NOV 30-DEC 2 THE CONSENSUS FOR REVISION RATHER THAN ABROGATION WAS STRENGTHENED BY THE FORMAL ENDORSEMENT OF REVISION BY THE COMMUNISTS (PCI) AND BY THE SOCIALISTS (PSI. DEBATE CONCLUDED TODAY (DEC 3) WITH A PARLIAMENTARY MOTION GIVING PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI THE GREEN LIGHT TO UNDERTAKE FORMAL NEGOTIATIONS WITH VATICAN ON THE REVISION OF THE CONCORDAT. END SUMMARY

2. AS FORESEEN IN ROME 19253 ON NOVEMBER 25 PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT THE GOI'S PLAN FOR THE REVISION OF THE 1929 CONCORDAT AND ASKED FOR PARLIAMENTARY
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PAGE 02 ROME 19770 01 OF 02 031823Z

AUTHORIZATION TO PROCEED TO NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE VATICAN.

THE PRIME MINISTER ADMITTED THAT HIS PROPOSALS WERE DEVELOPED BY A THREE-MAN COMMISSION, HEADED BY EX-MINISTER OF JUSTICE GONELLA, THAT THE VATICAN HAD BEEN CONSULTED AND THAT IT HAD INDICATED ITS WILLINGNESS TO BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS ON THE BASIS OF THE GOI'S PROPOSALS.

3. THE SUBSTANCE OF THE PROPOSALS. THE GOI PROPOSALS WOULD PROVIDE A MAJOR REVISION OF THE CONCORDAT--INDEED THE FIRST SIGNIFICANT REVISION SINCE 1929. THROUGH REGROUPING AND ELIMINATION, THE NUMBERS OF ARTICLES OF THE CONCORDAT WOULD BE REDUCED FROM 45 TO 14. AMONG THE PRESENT PROVISIONS WHICH WILL BE ELIMINATED ARE THOSE WHICH: REFER TO CATHOLICISM AS THE STATE'S RELIGION AND TO "SACRED CHARACTER" OF ROME; BAN DEFROCKED PRIESTS FROM PUBLIC OFFICE; REQUIRE GOVERNMENT APPROVAL OF APPOINTMENT OF BISHOPS; AND WHICH REQUIRE SPECIAL TREATMENT FOR PRIESTS CHARGED WITH PENAL OFFENSES. THESE ARE THE SO-CALLED "ANACHRONISTIC" PROVISIONS, IDENTIFIED BY THE 1968 GONELLA COMMISSION (SEE ROME A-

4. THE FOCUS OF PARLIAMENTARY ATTENTION AND CRITICISM, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN ON THREE ARTICLES REGARDING (1) MARRIAGE, (2) RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND (3) RELIGIOUS ENTITIES. ANDREOTTI TOLD PARLIAMENT THAT THE GOI IS PROPOSING PROFOUND CHANGES IN THE FIRST TWO:

--MARRIAGE WOULD NO LONGER BE CONSIDERED A "SACRAMENT" AND THAT THE CIVIL EFFECTS OF CHURCH MARRIAGES AND ANNULMENTS WOULD NO LONGER BE AUTOMATIC; AND

--RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN SCHOOLS WOULD NO LONGER BE "OBLIGATORY" BUT OPTIONAL FOR THOSE WHO WANTED IT.

ON THE THIRD ISSUE--RELIGIOUS ENTITIES--ANDREOTTI STATED THAT THIS SHOULD BE THE SUBJECT OF SEPARATE LEGISLATION BUT CONDITIONED ON PRIOR CONSULTATIONS WITH THE VATICAN. MOST POLITICAL PARTIES, INCLUDING THE PCI, PSI, AND PRI, EXPRESSED RESERVATIONS ON ANDREOTTI'S PROPOSALS ON THESE ISSUES.

5. SENSITIVE TO THE DEMANDS OF MINORITY RELIGIOUS GROUPS (PROTESTANT AND JEWISH - SEE ROME 19253) ANDREOTTI PROMISED CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 ROME 19770 01 OF 02 031823Z

SPECIAL LEGISLATION REGARDING THE RIGHTS OF OTHER DENOMINATIONS AND PROPOSED TO BEGIN WITH THE VALDESIAN AND METHODIST GROUPS. THE GOI, HE SAID, WAS COMMITTED TO RELIGIOUS LIBERTY AND HIS PROPOSALS WERE BASED ON TWO PRINCIPLES: LIBERTY AND EQUALITY--THE ELIMINATION OF PRIVILEGES.

6. THE EVOLVING PARLIAMENTARY CONSENSUS. THE IMMEDIATE REACTIONS TO THE ANDREOTTI PROPOSALS, AS REVEALED DURING THE

NOVEMBER 30 DEBATE, WERE MOSTLY CRITICAL. THE RADICALS (PR), THE DEMO-PROLETARIANS AND, SURPRISINGLY, THE LIBERALS (PLI) TOOK THE POSITION THAT THE GOI PROPOSALS WERE NOT IN CONCERT WITH THE TIMES AND THEREFORE THEY PREFERRED SIMPLE ABROGATION --CONSENSUAL, IF POSSIBLE, UNILATERAL, IF NECESSARY. THE REPUBLICANS (PRI) AND THE COMMUNISTS (PCI) WERE GENERALLY FAVORABLE. THE REACTIONS OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY (PSI) WERE, HOWEVER, INITIALLY DIVIDED AND CONFUSED. NO UNIFIED PSI POSITION EMERGED UNTIL THE SECOND DAY OF THE DEBATES (DEC 2). IT WAS ONLY AFTER THE PCI HAD MADE IT CLEAR THAT IT WOULD GO ALONG WITH MOST OF THE GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSALS THAT THE PSI DECIDED NOT TO OPPOSE THE INITIATION OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE VATICAN. BY WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2, ALL THE POLITICAL PARTIES HAD TAKEN PART IN THE DEBATE AND A CLEAR MAJORITY HAD JOINED THE CONSENSUS FOR REVISION. THE "CAPI GRUPI" OF THE DC, PCI, PSI, PSDI AND PRI ON DEC 2 AGREED JOINTLY TO SPONSOR DEC 3 A PARLIAMENTARY MOTION "INVITING" THE GOI TO NEGOTIATE WITH VATICAN, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THE CHAMBER'S DEBATES, TO "MAINTAIN CONTACTS" WITH PARLIAMENTARY

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PAGE 01 ROME 19770 02 OF 02 031855Z

41

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ROME 19770

GROUPS DURING THE NEGOTIATIONS AND TO REFER BACK TO THE PARLIAMENT PRIOR TO REACHING A FINAL AGREEMENT ON THE "PROTOCOL OF REVISION." THIS MOTION WAS PASSED OVERWHELMINGLY BY THE CHAMBER ON DEC 3 (412 VOTES FOR AND 32 AGAINST). THE ONLY

PARTIES WHICH OPPOSED IT WERE THE LIBERALS, THE RADICALS,
THE DEMO-PROLETARIANS AND THE NEOFASCISTS (MSI).

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7. THE SCENARIO FOR NEXT STEPS. WITH THE "GREEN LIGHT" OF THE CHAMBER IN HAND, GOI OFFICIALS, WHO ARE CLOSE TO THE NEGOTIATIONS, NOW EXPECT TO COMPLETE A REVISED TEXT OF THE CONCORDAT WITHIN A TWO-MONTH PERIOD. THE GOI AND THE VATICAN APPEAR EAGER TO EXPEDITE THE NEGOTIATIONS PROCESS. OBJECTIVELY, THIS IS AN EMINENTLY GOOD STRATEGY. THESE TWO PRINCIPAL ACTORS ARE WELL AWARE THAT THEY MUST TAKE ADVANTAGE QUICKLY OF THE EXISTING PARLIAMENTARY CONSENSUS BEFORE IT DISSIPATES ON THE SHOALS OF THE ABORTION OR SOME OTHER UNFORESEEN ISSUE.

8. WE UNDERSTAND THAT PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI IS CONSIDER-
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PAGE 02 ROME 19770 02 OF 02 031855Z

ING AN EXPANSION OF THE THREE-MAN NEGOTIATING COMMISSION IN ORDER TO INCLUDE ONE OR TWO PERSONS CLOSE TO THE "LAY PARTIES." WE DO NOT KNOW, HOWEVER, THE EXTENT TO WHICH HE FEELS COMPELLED TO OBTAIN FURTHER CONCESSIONS FROM THE VATICAN TO SATISFY THE RESERVATIONS EXPRESSED BY THE PARTIES IN THE CHAMBER DEBATE. A GOI SOURCE, WHO IS CLOSE TO THE NEGOTIATIONS, HAS TOLD US THAT THE PRIME MINISTER BELIEVES THAT THE CHAMBER HAS GIVEN HIM A MANDATE TO NEGOTIATE "WITHIN THE PARAMETERS" OF HIS NOV 25 PROPOSALS AND THAT HE WOULD SEEK ONLY RELATIVELY MINOR CHANGES.

9. COMMENT: UP TO THIS POINT ANDREOTTI SEEMS TO HAVE PERFORMED MASTERLY ON A VERY SENSITIVE AND POTENTIALLY DIVISIVE ISSUE. HE EXPLOITED THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE BY GIVING PARLIAMENT A WELL-ARTICULATED PRESENTATION OF A COMPLETE SET OF PROPOSALS, BY ASSOCIATING THE VATICAN AT THE DRAFTING STAGE OF THESE PROPOSALS AND FINALLY BY OBTAINING SUBSTANTIAL ASSENT TO MOST OF HIS PROPOSALS FROM THE COMMUNIST PARTY (PCI). WHILE THE PCI HAS ITS OWN LONG-RANGE OBJECTIVES FOR COLLABORATING, ANDREOTTI MADE PCI'S SUPPORT EASIER BY INTRODUCING IN HIS PROPOSALS IDEAS WHICH HAD BEEN PREVIOUSLY FLOATED BY THE PCI (SEE ROME A-415), BY PRIOR CONSULTATIONS THROUGH THE GONELLA COMMISSION, AND THROUGH ADROIT REFERENCES IN HIS PRESENTATION TO THE HISTORICAL SETTLEMENT OF 1946, WHEN THE DC AND PCI FORGED ARTICLE 7 OF THE REPUBLIC'S CONSTITUTION WHICH AFFIRMED THE CONTINUING VALIDITY OF LATERAN PACTS, INCLUDING THE 1929 CONCORDAT. END CONFIDENTIAL. VOLPE

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